DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 877 JC 960 471

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TITLE An Examination of Team-Taught Interdisciplinary Courses.
INSTITUTION Princeton Univ., NJ. Mid-Career Fellowship Program.
PUB DATE Jun 96
NOTE 33p.; In its: Issues of Education at Community Colleges: Essays by Fellows in the Mid-Career Fellowship Program at Princeton University; see JC 950 341. Sponsored by the Humanities Department, Raritan Valley Community College, NJ.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Course Evaluation; Grading; *Humanities Instruction; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Participant Satisfaction; Program Effectiveness; *Student Attitudes; *Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Methods; Team Teaching; Thematic Approach; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS Raritan Valley Community College NJ

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, faculty in the Humanities department at Raritan Valley Community College, in New Jersey, have developed two interdisciplinary, team-taught courses organized on a thematic basis. To determine student and faculty perceptions of these courses, the college distributed questionnaires to students in one of the courses, conducted follow-up interviews with 10 students 1 year after participation, and surveyed 13 faculty who had participated in the team-taught courses. Study findings, based on responses from 25 enrolled students, the 10 interviews, and responses from 11 faculty, included the following: (1) faculty and students found team-taught, interdisciplinary teaching both stimulating and enjoyable; (2) students felt that the approach led to a broader and deeper understanding of the material; (3) faculty stated that their students exhibited a greater interest in the course material than in traditional classes and seemed to enjoy the instruction; (4) faculty were also very satisfied with the learning environment provided by the course, since it required students to think and write at levels not often present in traditional courses; and (5) both students and faculty viewed the team approach to grading student assignments favorably. Contains 13 references. The survey instruments, with mean responses and standard deviations, and course announcements are appended. (TGI)

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ED 397 877

An Examination of Team-Taught Interdisciplinary Courses

sponsored by

The Humanities Department

Raritan Valley Community College

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Somerville, NJ

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History 520

Princeton University

May, 1996

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

JC 960 471

An Examination of Team-Taught Interdisciplinary Courses

sponsored by

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The late Ernest Boyer has pointed out in an essay in Common Knowledge that what American students sorely need, yet rarely get, "is a more coherent view of knowledge and a more integrated, more authentic view of life "(1993) The faculty in Humanities and the Liberal Arts at Raritan Valley Community College has recognized for some years that the compartmentalization of knowledge along the lines of traditional academic disciplines is often counterproductive and frequently results in fragmentation This fragmentation has created an educational environment where, as Boyer describes, little children who begin by asking "why," after several years of formal learning , instead most frequently ask "Will we have this on the test?"

Over the last decade the faculty at RVCC have attempted in a number of ways to rectify this situation They have developed such courses as Humanities I and II and Quest Self, Society and Nature, which are interdisciplinary, thematically organized and team-taught courses within the Humanities Department

History

In 1984 eight RVCC faculty (then Somerset County Community College) received a New Jersey State Humanities Grant to invigorate its Humanities offerings with an

interdisciplinary team-taught course which would satisfy the requirements of World Civilization I and II and English I and II. The faculty chose a non-traditional history text, The West and the World organized on a thematic basis and authored by RVCC historian, Kevin Reilly. The course sought to incorporate diverse material and strategies including novels, field trips, guest lectures, films and the required reading of a national newspaper, The New York Times. The faculty incorporated appropriate topics from the Social Sciences and Art History and through guest lectures and readings. The team agreed on eight themes to be covered over the course of two semesters. These themes have remained basically unchanged through 1995. They include: Gender and Family; Cities and Civilization; Religion and Society ; War and Aggression; Politics and Culture; Economy and Ecology; Racism Nationalism and Internationalism; and Individuality and Mass Culture.

In the initial year, the Humanities course was reinforced by another grant for a Humanist in Residence. The recipient , NYU Professor Emeritus, Andrew Lavender, provided guest lectures, participated in and observed classes and made suggestions. The initial year was quite successful based on evaluations of students, faculty and the Humanist in Residence. The outside evaluator who reviewed all grants that year describes the Humanities Course, as " The Jewel in the Crown ." The grant was continued for two additional years to incorporate new faculty and experiment with new materials. Since that time this course has been incorporated as a permanent offering of the Humanities Department. It has been taught every semester as a day course usually with a team of three faculty. It has also been offered several times in the evening with two faculty members.

In 1992 RVCC received a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant to conduct a summer institute for sixteen faculty to prepare them to teach a new team-taught humanities course, Quest. Nearly half the summer participants were alumni of the previously mentioned Humanities course.

The unifying theme of the course is the archetypal pattern of the human Quest as delineated in Joseph Campbell's seminal text, The Hero with a Thousand Faces. In the three units of the course the Quest is examined from several perspectives. One of the underlying goals of the course is to encourage students to see themselves and their lives in the contexts of both the society and the wider cosmos of which they are a part. As Campbell has written in The Power of Myth:

> Society was there before you, it is there after you are gone, and you are a member of it. The myths that link you to your social group, the tribal myths, affirm that you are an organ of the larger organism. Society itself is an organ of the larger organism which is the landscape, the world in which the tribe moves. (72)

The inherent structure of this theme - the self, the self in relation to society, self and society in relation to the cosmos- provides the structure of the course.

The Quest Course, like the Humanities Course was well received by the faculty participants, students and outside evaluators. Nearly all faculty from the Summer Institute have taught a section of the course and many have taught three or four sections. The Quest Course has become a permanent offering of the Humanities Department and

represents a Humanities Elective. It is now offered at least once each semester with two faculty in all sessions.

Student Responses

In some respects, our study is related to that of our colleague, Thomas E. Valasek, with whom we taught Introduction to Humanities I and II in the academic year 1994-95. Tom's study (A Survey of Student Attitudes in "Introduction to Humanities," an Interdisciplinary Team-Taught General Education Course at Raritan Valley Community College [May 20, 1994]), prepared for the 1993-94 Mid-Career Fellowship Program, was a comparative examination of the responses of students taking Humanities I and II with those taking English I and/or World Civilization I. Twenty-six of his twenty-nine questions dealt with comparisons, while only three asked about the interdisciplinary Humanities course and features unique to it. The present study of student responses focuses solely on the Humanities course. The questionnaire for this study, to which twenty-five students responded, consists of fifteen written questions and an opportunity for written comments (See Appendix), it is followed up by extensive interviews with ten students chosen randomly. While we supply a simple statistical analysis (See Appendix) including the mean, standard deviation, etc., our study is not primarily statistical. Rather it explores further what we have believed to be the case from anecdotal evidence from students over the years, i.e. that students enjoy the course and like the interdisciplinary team-teaching approach it employs. We explore further exactly why they like it and what particular and unique benefits they believe it gave them. In the follow-up interviews, conducted approximately one year after the students completed the course, we probed this latter question in light of the additional year of college experience which they have now

had. Accordingly, we rely heavily on the comments of the students themselves and, when appropriate, we have tried to use their exact words.

The questions break down into four clusters. The first cluster, consisting of Questions 1, 11, 12, and 13, deals explicitly with the interdisciplinary nature of the course. The second, consisting of Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, examines students' responses to our attempts to foster a more integrative understanding of the material. In this category, other questions probe the relevance of issues studied in class to current events. The third cluster, consisting of Questions 8, 9, and 14, looks explicitly at team teaching. Finally, the fourth cluster, consisting of Questions 10 and 15, deals with class trips.

Students were highly positive about the interdisciplinary nature of the course. The questions that addressed this aspect directly elicited mean responses of 4.20 to 4.36, with 5.0 being the most favorable response. Question 13 was one of several inverse order questions. It asked the following: "Studying history and literature together muddled issues and made history more difficult to understand." The mean response to this was 1.60, with 1.0 indicating the strongest disagreement. Responses to questions such as this enhanced our confidence in the reliability of the student responses.

In written comments and interviews, students expanded on these positive responses. The idea had been raised in class that one way of looking at literature that might be helpful in a course like this is to view literature as the interiorization of history. Several students referred to this concept and said that reading about individual characters made the movements and developments of history more human and more accessible. One student, referring to Question 11, wrote "I think that the question should read 'Studying history and literature together made the history more meaningful and alive for me.' At least that's

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how I felt." Conversely, others said that knowing about the history enabled them to understand and enjoy the literature more fully. Several pointed out that for the first time in their lives they had actually enjoyed studying history. One said, "I hated history before this class, but it was finally taught in a way in which I could appreciate it." Another, somewhat less enthusiastically, wrote that "I hate history, but this class made it bearable."

The mean responses for the second cluster of questions was slightly lower, ranging from 4.04 to 4.64, with the score on the "check and balance" question (Number 5) being 1.44.

In our "Economy and Ecology" unit, the class read the first chapter of J.E. Lovelock's Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth (Oxford, 1979). Several students referred to this as giving them a new way to look at life on our planet: a more holistic and better integrated perspective. They suggested that the course as a whole gave them such a perspective; a few commented that something they had learned in one unit helped them understand new material from an another apparently unrelated unit more deeply. One said that he could "take what we learned from this class, and apply it to other classes." When asked what exactly he found he could apply, he answered, "Skills in reading, writing, and analytical thinking."

Most students also liked the use of the New York Times and the way in which current events were related to our units under study. One young man said he particularly liked that we brought up "hot topics from current events as they happened." While virtually none of our students had more than glanced at the Times prior to taking Humanities, most said that they now looked at it occasionally. None said they read it regularly. One woman commented that after discussions based on readings in the Times, she felt "like we were

more hungry for knowledge." Another wrote, "The historical aspects of this course were excellent. The approach of bringing current affairs and tying them into history was excellent also."

The most positive and enthusiastic responses were to team-teaching. In this area, the mean responses ranged from 4.56 to 4.64 with a mean for inverse order response of 1.44. In both written and verbal comments, student after student said how much they enjoyed and benefited from having three instructors in the classroom. One wrote "Having three teachers is an added bonus. It provides three unique opinions on different topics." Another wrote "I like having three instructors. As a group you bring a wealth of knowledge and viewpoints that can't be found in other classes." Finally, another student stated, "I think the three-teacher atmosphere made our class more of a family discussion and brought everyone in our class closer together."

In follow-up interviews this point was explored further, especially when students felt three instructors were necessary and / or provided benefits that two would not. Students proved quite insightful on this matter. Overwhelmingly they favored the three-instructor paradigm. They explained that with two teachers the range of possibilities was limited, that the teachers would either agree and there would then be no further debate, or that they would disagree and an adversarial situation with two opposing viewpoints would result. On the other hand, with three instructors the permutations and subtle nuances were almost endless. This model often resulted in one or more instructors modifying their position so that new syntheses and understandings frequently emerged.

Students also liked three instructors in terms of paper-grading. One wrote "I especially liked having three different opinions from three professors when grading my

papers." The role of writing and student papers in the course will be discussed further shortly.

Students also commented that the disagreements or differing orientation among professors provided them with a model for rational and civil debate. One student said that this "provided an example for the class. It was great to watch when you guys would argue." He went on to explain that this arguing yielded an "ice-breaker" and enabled the students to feel more comfortable in disagreeing with us or with each other. A recent statement by Professor John Fleming of Princeton University about an interdisciplinary course he team-teaches resonates strongly of the views of our students. In the April 1, 1996 edition of the Princeton Weekly Bulletin, Fleming says of his students: "They get to know us very well, too, and they begin to see that we professors are not in any kind of lockstep about the meaning of the texts or how to interpret them. So they see a good example of a mature plurality of opinion." It is pleasing that our approach and observations are shared by a wide-range of academic institutions.

The final cluster of questions focuses on class trips, the means here are 4.12 and 4.20. The general feeling in this area seemed to be that the trips were most valuable in creating social cohesion rather than in their academic value. Students described how they got to know one another, as well as the instructors, better. They were more enthusiastic about the two New York trips than about the trip to the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center.

Two other areas not explicitly addressed in this questionnaire, but examined in the follow-up interviews, were student papers and guest speakers. The matter of student writing, involving such issues as the efficacy of paper topics and paper-grading, was discussed at length in Professor Valasek's essay. The interest here is more in how the

student papers tied in to the overall question of an interdisciplinary and team-taught educational experience. The comments by students, one year after the completion of the course, tended to be positive. Several said they initially found the paper topics (which were expository and analytical and never merely narrative) difficult. However, they now find that writing of this sort has prepared them very well for other college courses. One said "I left the class with a better understanding of writing papers." Another said "I was forced to be thoughtful. I learned to tie ideas together to write a paper." And a third: "It prepared me well for college. My writing improved and this has helped me out tremendously."

The format for grading papers was this: each paper had two readers. If they disagreed by a letter grade or less the grades were averaged, if they disagreed by more than one letter grade, a third reader was used to resolve the issue. Each group of papers was distributed randomly among the readers so that in the course of a semester every student would almost certainly have input from all three faculty members. The students particularly enjoyed receiving comments and grades from three different instructors. This view was summarized succinctly by one student who said, "I liked having the different opinions from three professors when grading very much."

Students had to write one research paper; the assignment came from the "War and Aggression" unit. This unit encapsulates in microcosm the multidisciplinary and, when feasible and applicable, the multimedia approaches used in this course. In addition to readings in Kevin Reilly's text, students read the chapter on aggression in Edward O. Wilson's <u>On Human Nature</u> (Cambridge, Mass., 1978) and the chapter "War and Peace" from <u>The Roots of War</u> (New York, 1989) by Anthony Stevens, a British psychiatrist and

Jungian analyst. They also read the novel, The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien, a wounded Viet Nam veteran. They saw the movie Born on the Fourth of July, in addition, they heard a lecture from Hugh Boyle, an alumnus of the course who is now completing his doctoral dissertation in history at Brown University. Hugh was badly wounded in Viet Nam when his munitions truck ran over a land mine in Cambodia in the spring of 1970. He was kind enough to join us for a discussion about Viet Nam the day after his lecture. All of these elements worked together to get the students genuinely interested in the Viet Nam War, from its history and geography to its psychology and literature. Many students said that doing the research for this paper was the best paper-writing experience they had ever had.

One student said that after Hugh's lecture she felt she could "reach out and touch the face of Viet Nam." In general, the guest lecturers were well received and much appreciated. They were all people who brought an immediacy and a strong sense of passion and involvement to their subjects. In addition to Hugh Boyle, numerous students mentioned Dr. Ernst Rohardt. Ernst had been a member of the Navy in Nazi Germany and had also been a prisoner of war in a Russian camp. He contributed to the unit on "Individuality and Mass Culture." Another well-regarded guest lecturer was Professor Carroll Wilson, Chair of the English Department. Carroll had been a participant in a special seminar on Paul Robeson at Rutgers University. His presentation on Robeson, which was part of the "Racism, Nationalism, and Internationalism" unit, also contained film clips and excerpts of Robeson's singing. One student, who had been moved by Carroll's talk, said she read Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings immediately after hearing him speak.

Students were encouraged, in both the instructions for the questionnaires and in interviews, to discuss areas of the course which they did not like or thought could be improved. While some seemed reluctant to do so, three areas of concern did emerge. Several students felt too much time had been spent on African material. One wrote that "we should concentrate less on African works." Another wrote that there were "too many African books. Europe has history, culture, and appropriate works too." This surprised us, since there were only two works by African writers on the syllabus, Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (New York, 1959) and Mariama Ba's Scarlet Song (Essex, England, 1986 English translation). It is hard to know exactly why some students felt this way, since no one admitted to this feeling in an interview. Perhaps the racism in our society has once again reared its head here. It is also possible that since none of us had personal experience with Nigeria and Senegal the depth of our presentation might have been less than in other areas. It should be emphasized that even though several students made these comments, they still represented a very small minority of the entire class.

Another concern, also expressed by a small minority, was with Kevin Reilly's text, The West and the World, second edition (New York, 1989). One student wrote, "Reilly's readings are difficult to understand at times." Other students commented that Reilly's point of view and orientation sometimes got in the way of their fully grasping the material. However, upon discussion, they did agree that Reilly is successful at making clear what, in fact, is his point of view and that there was not really a blurring of fact and opinion. They seemed to feel in general that the difficult passages were made comprehensible after class discussion.

The final concern which was voiced dealt with students who did not participate. Several students said they did not like people who weren't involved. Further discussion clarified the point that it was actually not the people they disliked, but rather the fact that such people remained uninvolved. In a relatively large discussion class (30-35 students), this is perhaps inevitable. However, we may in the future be able to develop strategies which will make more likely the full participation of all students.

Summary

The student responses clearly indicated that they liked the interdisciplinary nature of this course. They felt that this approach made sense, was more holistic, and enabled them to delve more deeply into the topics discussed. They also liked the "extra" elements which this course provided, such as the guest speakers and class trips. They felt that these additions helped make the class special and brought everyone closer together. They were virtually unanimous in liking the team teaching and felt it was an indispensable part of the course's success. To conclude this part of the paper, we will once more let the students speak for themselves. One student wrote "This course was representative of the true college experience, which should be to be presented with new and challenging ideas and be able to discuss these ideas in an open forum." Another wrote "I liked learning about history and being challenged to really think. I liked having many different points of view, and three teachers were great. I truly enjoyed this class, it has enhanced my interest in history immensely." Finally, another student put it simply and directly when she said "We came in as high school seniors, and we came out college kids."

Faculty Responses

The faculty questionnaire was sent to thirteen faculty who have participated in team-taught interdisciplinary courses in the Humanities Department(Appendix 3). Eleven responses were used for the analysis. Two individuals with only a semester's experience declined participation. For the group analyzed, the average number of semesters team-teaching is eleven. The questionnaire contained twenty-six questions. The first seventeen questions asked faculty to respond using a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). These questions focused on faculty perceptions of students and their own participation in this team-taught interdisciplinary instruction. Questions 18 through 24 were open-ended, asking for written comments on their experiences. Question 25 asked faculty to rate their overall experience from very negative(1) to very positive(5) and Question 26 asked if they would be willing to be interviewed as part of this research. Names were optional.

Faculty Perceptions About Students

As indicated above, student evaluations of their experiences in team-taught interdisciplinary courses are very positive. Likewise, the perception of the faculty who responded to the questionnaire was also quite positive. Faculty claim that their students exhibit a greater interest in the course material (3.7) and that they seem to enjoy this type of instruction more than other types of classes at the college(3.9). Faculty commented that students enjoy the different teaching styles and points of view and having more than one instructor available for consultation and grading.

To a slightly lesser degree faculty responded that students spend more time preparing for this type of class(3.64). They were, however, less sure that this interest leads to greater mastery of content and skills(3.3). They believe students are more likely to use consultation periods and to seek advice from instructors(3.7). Faculty comments suggest that this positive factor is created both by the format of the course as well as by the styles of the instructors.

Faculty's general perception is that interdisciplinary team-taught classes are not significantly more successful than their regular instruction in retaining students(2.6). In fact, several faculty believe that the retention rate in team-taught courses is lower than in their regular classes. One experienced faculty member commented that "the kind of student that is drawn to this type of course often has many areas of interest competing for time as well as the standard family and work obligations." These factors impact on persistence for community college students. Other faculty opined that, because of the extended time frame in the Humanities Course and the close relationships that develop, faculty feel the loss of students more in this type of teaching. Because the Humanities Course is a two-semester sequence, students not opting for the second semester might influence this perception. Retention is clearly an area for future research in interdisciplinary courses. The most recent college statistics suggest an official retention rate equal to other similar liberal arts courses. Unlike studies at other community colleges such as the 1991 study at Solano Community College in California, our team-taught course has not produced higher persistence rates.

The final observation of faculty is that, on average, students find few problems with the team grading process. In fact, as mentioned above, most students see team

grading as a positive factor. Several faculty responses, however, indicate that team grading was a problem for a few students. This difference in perception may reflect individual incidents or faculty discomfort with the process in certain situations. In interviews, faculty did point out that "there are always problems with grading and that the team grading was sometimes a plus because there was another faculty member to back up decisions." Other faculty stated that grading problems are "about the same or less" than in regular courses.

Superior Learning Environment

Faculty were asked to cite evidence, anecdotal or scientific, that team-taught interdisciplinary courses were superior as a learning environment. Faculty stated that the overwhelming sense from students over the years, is that integrating different kinds of experiences, materials and points of view require them to think and write at a level that is not often present in a traditional course. Faculty recounted examples of comments from students who cite class projects such as the walking tour of lower Manhattan, which required pre-trip study, a presentation on site and a follow-up paper, as examples of assignments that prepared them for the kind of learning that is later required in upper-division courses at four-year institutions. Other students noted the guest lectures and questions and answer sessions with participants from WWII and The Vietnam War totally changed their attitudes toward war and aggression and kindled a desire to know more about topic. Hugh Boyle of Brown University said the course "fundamentally changed my attitude about historical study so much so that I switched my major from the sciences to

history." In fact in a recent conversation he claimed " It was the best course I had at any level of education."

The teachers themselves felt that team-teaching in an interdisciplinary format offered them an opportunity to create a superior climate for learning. Many stated that teaching with another instructor allowed them to concentrate more on teaching and less on managing a class. Some related that one of the most positive aspects of team-teaching was learning new material and being able to respond to colleagues' ideas on the spot. Others thought, and the student responses confirmed, as one instructor put it, "that diversity of opinion and approach creates a much more lively classroom atmosphere for both students and faculty."

Faculty from the English Department cited studies which demonstrated that reading and writing about more sophisticated material produced a higher level of cognitive skills in these areas. E.D. Hirsch Jr. in Cultural Literacy has pointed out that while community college students possessed the necessary strategies for reading and writing they were not exposed to sufficient background material to achieve a high level of general literacy (47). Faculty confirm that these courses produce "students who feel more confident about being able to process complicated material and then write about it." This type of course helps to fill the void Hirsch indicates is present in our students' experience.

Faculty Observations About Participation in Team- Taught Interdisciplinary Teaching

Faculty report that the things they were most anxious about prior to their involvement with team-taught interdisciplinary teaching, such as compatibility with other

faculty, team grading and performance anxiety turned out not to be problems. Respondents stated that they had developed very positive relationships with other team members(4.36) In addition, there were no significant problems reported in working out a system of team grading. In fact, the faculty and the students found very positive aspects of team grading. Some faculty stated they were pleasantly surprised to see how easy it was to define an "A" , as well as a "D" or an "F" for the team. Faculty reported some slight performance anxiety,(3.18) but their comments suggest their comfort level rose considerably over time and with the number of semesters they participated in the shared classroom.

Impact on Teaching

The clearest positive benefit from team-taught interdisciplinary courses is that faculty gain more enthusiasm for teaching in general (4.27) and learn significant new material outside of their discipline (4.45). The written comments and statements from interviews strongly suggest team teaching provide more of a challenge as well as opportunities for learning and teaching material outside their discipline. They state that by, in effect, becoming a student for some material they gain new insights into their students and the learning process. This allow them to become a bridge for students with the other "expert" faculty in the classroom. Faculty note that while this type of teaching takes more time and effort it is also quite rewarding. One professor stated "It was a challenge and hard work but gratifying. It made me feel very positive about learning and teaching."

Faculty indicate they learned new teaching strategies from those with whom they shared the classroom (3.73) Experience with this type of teaching helps improve the quality of their own instruction (3.73). Though our questionnaire did not ask , some respondents volunteered that this process gave them more confidence that their current teaching methods were already very effective. They cited evidence of the feedback from their colleagues and from students that substantiate this new confidence in their expertise and the methods they employ in their other classes.

Our questionnaire asked faculty to provide written comments about the most positive and negative aspects of teaming with other faculty in interdisciplinary teaching. The near unanimous response on the positive side was that they enjoyed the interchange of ideas and the building on the ideas of colleagues. They were very positive about having this opportunity to learn new material and appreciated the opportunity to reinvigorate their teaching. One instructor mentioned "how enjoyable it is to be able to observe the reactions of students to the teaching that was going on!'

There was no similar clustering of negative responses . Nearly a third stated they experienced no negative aspects, another third saw no significant drawbacks but when pushed could cite one item. The other third experienced some problems, such as finding the amount of time necessary to prepare for this type of course. Only one person claimed a negative impact on their teaching. In a follow-up interview with this teacher it was discovered that only one of several team-teaching experiences was negative and the overall experience was positive.

Respondents were also asked to provide advice for faculty who were considering this type of teaching. Faculty responses were suprisingly homogeneous. The

overwhelming advice from faculty was to suggest that other faculty try this type of teaching. Faculty suggested various strategies to insure that the experience is a profitable one. First, visit each other's classes. Be sure you can work together harmoniously. Nearly two-thirds suggested that adequate consultation and planning time be built into the schedule. The ideal time for such planning for most participants was the hour immediately preceding the class period. Others suggested that instructors "should be open and ready to share their classroom" and that " faculty must be open to change and ready to compromise on the ways they traditionally conduct classes." It is also important to have good coordination with academic advisors. It is imperative that these advisors understand the course and its objectives and communicate this information to students during orientation. If necessary faculty should be prepared to attend these orientation session and speak directly with the students. In the case of our courses at RVCC, our success has been based on our close working relationship with the advising staff and their recognition of the value of interdisciplinary team-teaching instruction for the students.

All respondents said they plan to be part of a team-taught interdisciplinary course in the future and they recommend this experience to others. All suggest that the college should expand its offerings of this type of class, and all said they would volunteer to participate in grant writing to expand these offerings. All respondents signed their questionnaires and agreed to be interviewed for this project.

The clearest consensus that emerged from the questionnaire was the overall satisfaction level of participants with the entire team teaching experience (4.5). Even individuals who experienced some negative aspects rated their overall experience as very positive. Only one individual rated their overall experience as somewhat negative. In a

subsequent interview the instructor stated that she started teaching two interdisciplinary courses at the same time. She said this was "too much," and in addition she experienced some difficulty in adjusting to sharing control of the classroom. She also mentioned that the experience in spite of the negative aspects, made her "a better teacher," and she looked forward to a more positive team-teaching experience in the future. As this example illustrates the satisfaction level was generally higher in faculty with the most experience. The transition to sharing a classroom and committing to learning and teaching new material can have some bumps in the beginning but becomes smoother and more rewarding with experience.

Conclusions

Faculty and students find team-taught interdisciplinary teaching both stimulating and enjoyable. Students confirm that an holistic approach to the study of English and History lead to a broader and deeper understanding of the themes studied. They cite guest speakers and field trips as very positive aspects of the experience. Students enjoy the study of history with a contemporary component and they are very positive about a learning environment which allows for the inclusion of topical issues when they arise. Faculty perceptions about students substantiate these views. Faculty agree that having more than one instructor and an interdisciplinary approach produces a superior teaching and learning environment.

Responses to the Faculty questionnaire indicate that problems they envisioned, such as conflicts over grading, did not materialize. Faculty found teaching in this mode quite invigorating since they believe it improves their teaching through learning new

materials and strategies. They enjoy the opportunity to exchange and develop ideas in class with colleagues.

Faculty strongly urge other faculty members to try this type of teaching. They do suggest, however, first to check for compatibility, and the availability of adequate time for preparation and consultation. They also recommend that the administration provide more opportunities for these team-taught courses. Furthermore, they are willing to work with the college to secure grants for this purpose. Faculty data strongly suggest that satisfaction with team-taught interdisciplinary instruction increases with experience.

Areas for further investigation and research include comparative and longitudinal studies of retention statistics in team-taught and traditional courses, strategies for encouraging student participation and a comparison of the Quest Course and the Humanities Course in terms of student outcomes.

Postscript

On April 19, 1996, RVCC hosted a conference sponsored by the National Science Foundation in cooperation with the NJCATE on effective teaching strategies and pedagogy. Present at this conference were Quest and Humanities Faculty as well as instructors who had combined science and economics, and psychology and literature in a team-teaching format. We shared the data from our research as part of a panel entitled "The Pleasures and Perils of Team Teaching." Panelists from RVCC and other institutions agreed with our basic findings. In particular, they agreed that having more than one instructor is positive for both faculty and students. They also agreed that the most positive factor for faculty in this type of teaching is the opportunity to build on colleagues'

ideas in the classroom. They found our advice for new faculty in this study to be worthwhile and they suggested that it be more widely shared with faculty planning to engage in interdisciplinary team-teaching.

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Appendix

RESULTS

Supplemental Survey of Student Attitudes
About Introduction to Humanities II
At Raritan Valley Community College

Directions: Using your experience in Introduction to Humanities II, indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements below, using the following number scale:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = undecided

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

STD. DEV.	MEAN	
.76	4.20	1. The interdisciplinary nature of the course helped me understand the issues covered in the course more deeply.
.75	4.16	2. The different units in the course worked together in such a way that each unit helped illuminate the issues in another unit.
.57	4.64	3. The course showed me that history is an ongoing process and helped me see the relationship between past and present.
.76	4.20	4. The course increased my understanding of important current events more deeply.
.58	1.44	5. The issues discussed in class had no relationship to important issues of the present.
.64	4.08	6. The course encouraged me to analyze issues and think for myself with more confidence.
.89	4.04	7. The atmosphere in the class encouraged me to question some of my old beliefs and assumptions.
.49	4.64	8. Having more than one instructor helped provide models for expressing honest intellectual disagreement.
.87	4.56	9. Having more than one instructor helped me understand that on complex issues there is often no simple answer.
.82	4.20	10. The class trips helped tie in classroom learning with experiential learning.
.49	4.36	11. Studying history and literature together made the literature more meaningful and alive for me.

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STD. DEV.	MEAN	
.57	4.36	12. Studying history and literature together made me more aware of the human side of history (i.e. the impact of events on individual people's lives).
.58	1.60	13. Studying history and literature together muddled issues and made history more difficult to understand.
.82	1.44	14. Having more than one instructor was unsettling and often left me feeling confused.
.93	4.12	15. The class trips made some of the issues studied more alive and meaningful for me.

Please add any comments you would like to make about any of these questions and / or any other aspect of the course.

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RESULTS

Interdisciplinary Team-Teaching Assessment Instrument

As part of my research project for the Mid-Career Fellowship at Princeton University I am studying the impact of interdisciplinary teams on the faculty involved. My focus is those of you who have taught the Humanities I and II and the Quest Course.

You can be sure that the information you share will be held in confidentiality. I would appreciate your signing your questionnaire if you feel comfortable doing so, since I may wish to contact you with some follow-up questions for the study. Please feel free to suggest any additional areas of exploration regarding the impact this type of teaching has on those who participate in it.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation and I will be happy to share the results of my research with you when it is completed.

Bud McKinley

Directions: Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements listed below. Use the following key:

SA	Strongly Agree
A	Agree
U	Undecided
D	Disagree
SD	Strongly Disagree

Students in interdisciplinary team taught courses when compared to traditionally taught courses:

						MEAN	STD.DE
1. exhibited a greater interest in course material.	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.70	1.06
2. demonstrated greater mastery of content and skills.	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.30	.95
3. spent more time preparing for class.	SA	A	U	D	SD	2.70	.48
4. were more likely to use consultation or seek advice.	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.70	1.06
5. had a higher retention rate.	SA	A	U	D	SD	2.60	1.07
6. enjoyed the class more.	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.90	1.10
7. had problems with team grading.	SA	A	U	D	SD	2.55	1.29

As a teacher in an interdisciplinary team taught course I:

8. had positive relationships with other team members.	SA	A	U	D	SD	4.36	.81
9. spent more time in class preparation.	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.64	1.21
10 experienced some performance anxiety	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.18	1.17
11. had some problems with team grading.	SA	A	U	D	SD	2.27	1.10
12 developed new teaching strategies.	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.82	.98
13 improved my overall quality of instruction.	SA	A	U	D	SD	3.73	1.01
14. learned significant material outside my area.	SA	A	U	D	SD	4.45	.52
15. plan to teach this type of course in the future.	SA	A	U	D	SD	4.36	.67
16. would highly recommend team teaching to other faculty	SA	A	U	D	SD	4.27	.79
17. have gained more enthusiasm for teaching in general.	SA	A	U	D	SD	4.27	.65

How many semesters have you taught the Quest Course? _____

How many semesters have you taught the Humanities Course? _____

18 What do you like most about interdisciplinary team-teaching?

19 What do you like least about interdisciplinary team-teaching?

20 What advice what you give faculty who are considering interdisciplinary team -teaching?

21 Do you believe RVCC should offer more courses using the interdisciplinary team- teaching format?

22 Is there anything that would facilitate your participation in interdisciplinary team- taught courses in the future?

23 Do you have any evidence, empirical or anecdotal, that interdisciplinary team-teaching is a superior learning environment for students? If so, please describe.

24 Would you participate in grant writing to expand offerings in interdisciplinary team -taught courses? All Yes.

25 How would you rate your overall experience in team teaching ?

					MEAN	STD. DEV.
very negative	somewhat negative	neutral	positive	very positive	4.45	.69

26 May I contact you for an interview regarding team teaching? All Yes.
yes no

Name (optional) All Signed

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FALL 1996 COURSE OFFERING

Introduction to Humanities I

6 credits (3 credits English I, 3 credits World Civilization I)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Professors McKinley and Warrence

Tuesday & Thursday
5:00 PM - 7:40 PM

Professors Bodino and Reilly

History with an emphasis on today's issues.
English Composition with a focus on stimulating topics.
Team-taught by English and history faculty.

Innovative.....Challenging.....Relevant

TOPICS:
Gender and Family
Cities and Civilization
Religion and Society
War and Peace

HIGHLIGHTS:
Walking tour of lower Manhattan
Visit to Buddhist Monastery
Guest lecture with slides on Vietnam
Select novels and films
Individual attention

For more information call 231-8816

Raritan Valley Community College
Route 28 & Lamington Road, North Branch, New Jersey

Quest

Self, Society, and Nature

This 3-credit course, taught by faculty from different disciplines, explores:
The Self: The mythology, psychology, and history of the individual;
The Self & Society: Conflict and conformity;
The Self & Nature: Human origins, evolution, and ecology;

Prerequisite: English I
Quest transfers as a Humanities or general education elective.

Quest

(Course #54-202,Section 51)
is taught by Professors Kevin Reilly and Angela Bodino

on Mondays from 5:00 to 7:40 pm

The Quest course has been supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities

Raritan Valley Community College

SPRING COURSE OFFERING

Introduction to Humanities II

6 credits (3 credits English II, 3 credits World Civilization II)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Professors McKinley, Valasek and Warrence

History with an emphasis on today's issues.
English Composition with a focus on stimulating topics.
Team-taught by English and History faculty.
Prerequisite - English I or Humanities I

Innovative.....Challenging.....Relevant

TOPICS:
Politics and Culture
Economy and Ecology
Racism and Nationalism
Individuality and Mass Culture

HIGHLIGHTS:
Trip to New York City and Ellis Island
Guest Lecturers
Select Novels and Films
Individual Attention

For more information call (908) 231-8816

Raritan Valley Community College
Route 28 & Lamington Road, North Branch, New Jersey